

Hanukkah Festival Talmud Study

Where Do These Customs Come From Anyway?

Talmud Bavli, Masekhet Shabbat, 21b-22a

21b

The Rabbis taught: It is a commandment to place the Hanukkah light outside by the entrance to one's house. If one dwells on an upper floor, one places it by the window that faces out to the public. In a time of danger, one places it on the table and that is enough.

כא:

תנו רבנן: נר חנוכה מצוה להניחה על פתח ביתו מבחוץ. אם היה דר בעלייה - מניחה בחלון הסמוכה לרשות הרבים. ובשעת הסכנה - מניחה על שלחנו, ודין.

1) What did we learn last year from our Talmud text study about Hanukkah?

2) What are the three different rules that the Tanna'im teach about the placement of the Hanukkah lights in this *b'raita*? Why do you think the Rabbis require this placement?

3) Were you surprised by any of these rules? Which one and why?

4) What do you think is meant here by "a time of danger?"

Rava said: One needs to use another light to light it. If there is a bonfire, it is not necessary. In the case of an "important person," s/he needs another light even if there is a blazing fire.

אמר רבא: צריך נר אחרת להשתמש לאורה. ואי איכא מדורה - לא צריך, ואי אדם חשוב הוא, אף על גב דאיכא מדורה - צריך נר אחרת.

1) What common rule about the Hanukkah lights is the Amora Rava the source for in his teaching?

2) What do you think the bonfire is? What is the purpose of the bonfire?

3) Who do you think an "important person" is?

What is Hanukkah? For our Rabbis taught: On the 25th of Kislev, there are eight days of Hanukkah on which we do not recite eulogies or fast. For when the Greeks entered the Temple, they made impure all of the oil that was there. When the Hasmonean Dynasty overcame and defeated them, they searched and found only one cruze of oil that held the seal of the High Priest, and in it there was only enough to burn for one day. A miracle occurred and they lit from it for eight days. The following year, they established and made them festive days with Hallel and Thanksgiving prayers.

מאי חנוכה? דתנו רבנן: בכ"ה בכסליו יומי דחנוכה תמניא אינון, דלא למספד בהון ודלא להתענות בהון. שכשנכנסו יוונים להיכל טמאו כל השמנים שבהיכל, וכשגברה מלכות בית חשמונאי ונצחום, בדקו ולא מצאו אלא פך אחד של שמן שהיה מונח בחותמו של כהן גדול, ולא היה בו אלא להדליק יום אחד, נעשה בו נס והדליקו ממנו שמונה ימים. לשנה אחרת קבעום ועשאום ימים טובים בהלל והודאה.

1) According to the *b'rait*a, what is the story of Hanukkah? What do the Rabbis emphasize as essence of the story?

2) What are the rituals/religious observances that are prescribed in this *b'rait*a?

3) What are the "Hallel and Thanksgiving prayers" that are being referred to in the *braita*?

22a

Raba said: "It is a commandment to place the Hanukkah light within one tefah of the entrance (to your house)." And where should one place it? Rav Aha the son of Rava said: "From the right." Rav Sh'muel from Difti said: "From the left." And the law is: from the left so that the Hanukkah light will be on the left and the m'zuzah on the right.

כב.

אמר רבה: נר חנוכה מצוה להניחה בטפח הסמוכה לפתח. והיכא מנח ליה? רב אחא בריה דרבא אמר: מימין, רב שמואל מדפתי אמר: משמאל. והילכתא - משמאל, כדי שתהא נר חנוכה משמאל ומזוזה מימין.

1) Is this teaching linked to an earlier section of Talmud? Which one? What issue is this teaching from the amora Rabbah working to clarify?

2) What is the *halakha* and why?

...Rav Y'huda said in the name of Rav Asi who taught in the name of Rav: "It is forbidden to count money near the Hanukkah lights.

...אמר רב יהודה אמר רב אסי (אמר רב):
אסור להרצות מעות כנגד נר חנוכה.

1) Is this teaching linked to an earlier section of Talmud? Which one? What issue is this teaching from the amora'im working to clarify?

2) What is the purpose of the mentioning of the names of all of those amora'im in the introduction to the teaching? Research when each of those Rabbis lived and write out a mini-timeline for the development of this teaching.